

BREAKING NEW GROUND:



The Next Chapter Begins

Gen. (Ret.) Stephen Lorenz, '73, named as new President of the Endowment

The routine of packing and moving, settling into a new desk in a new office and getting acquainted with new colleagues while figuring out how to advance the mission has become all too familiar to Gen. (Ret.) Stephen Lorenz, '73, over the course of his 37 years of service in the Air Force. Military service demanded relocations to numerous bases around the nation and beyond; however, with his latest relocation, that is no longer necessary. Lorenz, in his first position as a civilian, is taking the reins as the new president and chief executive officer of the United States Air Force Academy Endowment.

His new office at the Endowment headquarters in Doolittle Hall faces the Academy, providing an unimpeded view of the Cadet Area, surrounded by greenery and framed by the mountains. Lorenz graduated from the Academy

By Ann Collum

as a second lieutenant and returns as a retired four-star general, ready to devote his efforts to encouraging others to give back to the institution that gave them their start.

Lorenz considers this all part of a lifelong journey, one that started when he was nine years old. In 1960, his father was a captain in the Air Force, stationed at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado. Lorenz visited the fledgling Academy with his father and was instantly smitten. “I remember standing there,” he says, “under the bright blue mountain sky and pledging to myself that one day this was the place I would go to school. I didn’t know how I was going to get there, but I knew that I was going to devote all of my energy to becoming a cadet at the most beautiful school I had ever seen.”

On June 23, 1969, all of Lorenz’s efforts paid off as he reported to the Academy as part of the Class of 1973. After receiving his commission, Lorenz put the work ethic and values he learned as a cadet into practice, using each new assignment to refine his ideas on leadership and how to best advance the mission. Starting with his undergraduate pilot training, he progressed steadily up the ranks, taking on more responsibility with each position. “Early in my career, I realized that our profession—service to our nation—is a family business,” he says. “We are a family of brothers and sisters in arms. This is where we learn to support others, reaffirming our commitment over and over again as we live, train, sweat and bleed together.”

Lorenz has commanded at every level of the Air Force over the course of his career, including various air refueling and air mobility wings, Air University, Air Education and Training Command and the training wing of the Air Force Academy itself. “My time acting as the Commandant of Cadets was a proud milestone for me,” he says. “I never anticipated that I would someday serve my alma mater in that capacity. It’s been a remarkable run.”

Now retired from active duty, he is returning to the Academy again, to serve in his new role with the

Endowment. “The Endowment has created a certain momentum at the Academy over the past year with the Holaday Athletic Center and fundraising for the Center for Character and Leadership Development,” Lorenz says. “I see giving back to the Academy and building a thriving culture of support as part of a journey that we will all undertake as graduates, parents and friends of this great institution. Some extraordinary people launched us on this journey before I came into the picture, and the success we enjoy is due to their efforts.”

“With the support of the entire Endowment team, members of our Executive Committee—Bart Holaday, ’65; Erv Rokke, ’62; Terry Drabant, ’65; Bill Wecker, ’63; and Bill Maywhort, ’68—worked with key players like the Superintendent, Lt. Gen. Mike Gould, ’76; Jay Kelley, ’64, of the Falcon Foundation, Phil Erdle of the Academy Research and Development Institute and William “T” Thompson, ’73, of the Association of Graduates, among others, to set us on this path,” he says. “I look forward to working with such a dedicated group of individuals as we start this new chapter of philanthropy at our Academy.”

Dr. Rokke, the outgoing president of the Endowment, shares Lorenz’s enthusiasm for the transition.

“I can’t think of a better person for this position,” he says. “I’m honored that someone of his stature, with a long history of advocating on behalf of the Academy and everything it represents, would accept the job.”

Aside from the gratification of working in support of his alma mater, one of the benefits of taking the position is getting to purchase what he jokingly refers to as his “starter home.” Without having to anticipate the next relocation, Lorenz and his wife, Leslie, finally bought their first house, navigating a procession of realtors and home showings to settle upon their first choice: a comfortable home in a quiet neighborhood ... next door to Pam and Erv Rokke. “We certainly didn’t plan it this way,” says Lorenz. “But it definitely drives home the point that working for the Endowment isn’t just a career choice; it’s all part of the family business.” ■

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